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United Nations Conferences and Observances

This year, the international community will focus on a variety of concerns, in a number of global meetings. The World Summit on the Information Society will meet from 10 to 12 December in Geneva, and again in Tunis in 2005. For its part, the General Assembly will hold a two-day, High-Level Dialogue on financing for development at the end of October.

An International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material will take place in Vienna, from 7 to 11 July, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), while a Global Biotechnology Forum will be held in Chile in December 2003, under the auspices of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and Representatives of International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation will be held at Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 28 to 29 August 2003. Finally, a high-level political conference for the purpose of signing the United Nations Convention against Corruption will take place in Mexico for a three-day period before year's end.

This year, the international community is observing the International Year of Freshwater. The Assembly has also invited the international community to observe 2003 as the Year of Kyrgyz Statehood, an initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic. It has also declared two new international days: the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21 May) and the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers (29 May). In addition, the Assembly has assigned 23 June for the observance of United Nations Public Service Day.

The following pages contain information on United Nations conferences and special observances scheduled for 2003 and ensuing years, listed by theme. Under each subject heading, conferences and meetings are listed first, followed by special decades, years, weeks and days, in that order.

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AIDS

World AIDS Day
(1 December)

The General Assembly, in 1988, stated its deep concern about the pandemic proportions of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Noting that the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared 1 December 1988 World AIDS Day, the Assembly stressed the importance of observing that occasion (resolution 43/15). Today, over 41 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

CHILDREN

International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
(4 June)

On 19 August 1982, at its emergency special session on the question of Palestine, the General Assembly, "appalled at the great number of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese children victims of Israel's acts of aggression", decided to commemorate 4 June of each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (resolution ES-7/8).

Universal Children's Day
(20 November)

The General Assembly recommended in 1954 (resolution 836 (IX)) that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children and of activity promoting the welfare of the world's children. It suggested to governments that the Day be observed on the date which each considers appropriate. The date of 20 November marks the day in which the Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
(21 May)

Emphasizing the need to enhance the potential of culture as a means of achieving prosperity, sustainable development and global peaceful coexistence, the General Assembly, on 20 December 2002, proclaimed 21 May the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (resolution 57/249). Acting during the closing days of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage (2002), the Assembly recognized the close link between protecting cultural diversity and the larger framework of the dialogue among civilizations.

DECOLONIZATION

Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010)

On 8 December 2000, as the General Assembly observed the fortieth anniversary of its adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, it declared 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (resolution 55/146). In 2001, the Assembly called upon the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the Special Committee on decolonization to finalize before the end of 2002 a programme of work for the Non-Self-Governing Territories, on a case-by-case basis, to facilitate implementation of the relevant resolutions on decolonization (resolution 56/74 of 10 December). The First Decade, 1990-2000, was declared in 1988 (resolution 43/47).

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories (beginning 25 May)

The General Assembly in 1999 requested the Special Committee on decolonization to observe annually the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories commencing on the week beginning 25 May 1999 (resolution 54/91 of 6 December). The Week had been proclaimed in 1972 (resolution 2911 (XXVII)) as the Week of Solidarity with the Colonial Peoples of Southern Africa and Guinea (Bissau) and Cape Verde Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Equal Rights, to begin on 25 May, Africa Liberation Day.

DISABLED PERSONS

International Day of Disabled Persons (3 December)

In 1992, at the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), the General Assembly proclaimed 3 December as the International Day of Disabled Persons (resolution 47/3). The Decade had been a period of raising awareness and enacting measures to improve the situation of persons with disabilities and to provide them with equal opportunities. Subsequently, the Assembly appealed to Member States to highlight the observance of the Day in order to further integrate people with disabilities into society (resolution 47/88).

DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2005)

The Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will hold their next review conference in 2005. The General Assembly, on 22 November 2002, called upon the nuclear-weapon States to respect fully their existing commitments regarding security assurances, pending the conclusion of multilaterally negotiated, legally binding assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States parties, and agreed to prioritize this issue with a view to making recommendations to the 2005 Review Conference (resolution 57/59).

Disarmament Week (24-30 October)

The annual observance of Disarmament Week, which begins on the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, was called for in the Final Document of the General Assembly 1978 special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2). States were invited to highlight the danger of the arms race, propagate the need for its cessation and increase public understanding of the urgent tasks of disarmament.

In 1995, the Assembly invited governments, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to continue taking an active part in Disarmament Week (resolution 50/72 B of 12 December). It invited the Secretary-General to continue using the United Nations information entities as widely as possible to promote a better understanding among the public of disarmament problems and the aims of the Week.

DRUG ABUSE CONTROL

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (26 June)

The General Assembly in 1987 decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking as an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse. It took that action on 7 December 1987 (resolution 42/112), following a recommendation of the 1987 International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which, on 26 June, had adopted the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and Representatives of International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (28-29 August 2003)

The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation will be held at Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 28 and 29 August 2003 (resolution 57/242 of 20 December 2002). The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States has been designated by the Assembly to serve as the Secretary-General of the Conference.

High-Level Dialogue on financing for development (October 2003)

The General Assembly, on 20 December 2002, decided to hold a two-day High-Level Dialogue on financing for development at the end of October 2003, to focus on implementation of the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development (resolution 57/250). It also decided to hold the High-Level Dialogue biennially at the ministerial level, to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for general follow-up to the Conference and related issues. The overall theme of the October meetings will be "The Monterrey Consensus: status of implementation and tasks ahead".

Global Biotechnology Forum (December 2003)

The Government of Chile will host a Global Biotechnology Forum in December 2003 for multi-stakeholder discussions under the auspices of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in cooperation with other relevant organizations (resolution 57/237). The General Assembly, on 20 December 2002, took note of Chile's proposal and encouraged interested Member States to work with UNIDO to ensure that the Forum has realistic objectives and produces useful outcomes. It encouraged interested Member States to consider providing financial or other support to the Forum and/or to the regional preparatory meetings.

High-level political conference for the purpose of signing the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003)

Noting the progress made by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption and urging it to endeavour to complete its work by the end of 2003, the General Assembly has decided to convene a high-level political conference for the purpose of signing the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Mexico by the end of 2003. By its resolution 57/169 of

18 December 2002, the Assembly asked the Secretary-General to schedule the conference for a period of three days before the end of 2003, inviting all States to arrange to be represented there by persons at the highest possible level of government.

United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

On 21 December 2001, the General Assembly decided to establish a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication and the promotion of human and social development in developing countries, in its resolution on the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, 1997-2006 (resolution 56/207). It also asked the Secretary-General to submit recommendations on mechanisms, modalities, terms of reference, mandates and governance with a view to establishing that fund.

The Assembly proclaimed the Decade in 1995 (resolution 50/107 II of 20 December) to follow up on the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, 1996. The Decade's main objective is eradicating absolute poverty and reducing overall poverty substantially in the world. The theme for the Decade is "Eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind" (resolution 51/178 of 16 December 1996).

Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa (2001-2010)

On 7 September 2001, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 2001-2010 as the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa (resolution 55/284). In its efforts to address one of the most deadly tropical diseases -- which causes some 1 million deaths each year in Africa where nine out of 10 cases occur -- the Assembly called for joint comprehensive efforts by Africa and the international community to reach certain goals by 2005, the middle of the Decade.

These include ensuring that at least 60 per cent of those at risk for malaria shall benefit from the most suitable combination of personal and community protective measures, such as insecticide treated bednets; that at least 60 per cent of all pregnant women at risk for malaria shall have access chemoprophylaxis or presumptive intermittent treatment; and that at least 60 per cent of those suffering from malaria shall have prompt access to correct, affordable and appropriate treatment within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms.

United Nations Literacy Decade: Education for All (2003-2012)

On 19 December 2001, the General Assembly proclaimed 2003 to 2012 as the United Nations Literacy Decade: Education for All (resolution 56/116). The Assembly reaffirmed that literacy for all was at the heart of the notion of basic education for all, and that creating literate environments was essential to eradicating poverty, achieving gender equity and ensuring sustainable development.

International Year of Microcredit (2005)

In 1998, proclaiming 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit (resolution 53/197 of 15 December), the General Assembly requested that the Year's observance be a special occasion for giving impetus to microcredit programmes throughout the world. The Assembly asked all those involved in poverty eradication to take additional steps to make available credit and related services for self-employment and income-generating activities to an increasing number of people living in poverty. Governments, NGOs, the private sector and the media were invited to highlight the role of microcredit in poverty eradication, its contribution to social development, and its positive impact on the lives of the poor.

International Day of Cooperatives (first Saturday of July)

In 1992, the General Assembly proclaimed the first Saturday of July 1995 to be International Day of Cooperatives (resolution 47/90 of 16 December). The date marked the centenary of the International Cooperative Alliance, an umbrella group of organizations comprising 760 million members in 100 countries.

In 1994, recognizing that cooperatives were becoming an indispensable factor of economic and social development, the Assembly invited governments, international organizations, specialized agencies and national and international cooperative organizations to observe the Day every year (resolution 49/155 of 23 December).

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October)

In 1992, the General Assembly, welcoming the fact that certain NGOs, on the initiative of one of them (the French-based International Movement ATD Fourth World), had, in many States, observed 17 October as World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, declared that date the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (resolution 47/196 of 22 December). The observance aims to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries -- a need that has become a development priority.

Africa Industrialization Day (20 November)

Within the framework of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, the General Assembly proclaimed 20 November as Africa Industrialization Day (resolution 44/237 of 22 December 1989). The Day is intended to mobilize the commitment of the international community to the industrialization of Africa.

International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development (5 December)

The General Assembly has invited governments to observe annually, on 5 December, the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, also urging them to heighten awareness of the contribution of volunteer service, thereby stimulating more people in all walks of life to offer their services as volunteers, both at home and abroad (resolution 40/212 of 17 December 1985). In 2001, the International Year of Volunteers, the Assembly adopted a set of recommendations on ways that governments and the United Nations system could support volunteering and asked that they be widely disseminated (resolution 56/38 of 5 December 2001).

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

International meeting to review implementation of Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (2004)

On 20 December 2002, the Assembly decided to convene an international meeting in 2004 to review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (resolution 57/262). It welcomed the offer of the Government of Mauritius to host that meeting, which will include a high-level segment.

The Assembly also decided to convene regional preparatory meetings of small island developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions, as well as an interregional preparatory meeting for all small island developing States. It decided to establish a voluntary fund to assist small island developing States, including the least developed, to participate fully in the meeting and its preparatory processes, governments, intergovernmental organizations and the major groups accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development to contribute to that fund.

United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)

The General Assembly, on 20 December 2002, proclaimed the 10-year period beginning on 1 January 2005 as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (resolution 57/254). The Assembly designated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as lead agency for promotion of the Decade, asking it to develop a draft international implementation scheme, clarifying the Decade's relationship with such existing educational processes as the Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum in 2002 and the United Nations Literacy Decade.

International Year of Freshwater (2003)

The General Assembly has proclaimed 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater, inviting States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to increase awareness of the importance of freshwater (resolution 55/196). On 20 December 2002, the Assembly welcomed the activities in preparation for the Year undertaken by States, the Secretariat and United Nations bodies engaged in inter-agency work and by major groups, and encouraged them to continue their efforts (resolution 57/252). The Assembly encouraged Member States, the United Nations systems and major groups to promote action at the local, national, regional and international levels. It also called for high priority to be given to the serious freshwater problems facing many regions, especially developing countries.

World Day for Water (22 March)

The General Assembly has declared 22 March as World Day for Water (resolution 47/193 of 22 December 1992). The observance aims at promoting awareness of the extent to which water resource development contributes to economic productivity and social well-being.

International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May)

On 20 December 2000, the General Assembly proclaimed 22 May, the date of adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as the International Day for Biological Diversity (resolution 55/201). The Day was previously observed on 29 December (resolution 49/119 of 19 December 1994). In 2000, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its fifth meeting, had recommended that the date be changed to give it greater visibility.

World Environment Day (5 June)

By resolution 2994 (XXVII)) of 15 December 1972, the General Assembly designated 5 June as World Environment Day to deepen public awareness of the need to preserve and enhance the environment. That date recalls the opening day of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), which led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (17 June)

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, 17 June, was proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1994 (resolution 49/115). On that date, the same year, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted. States were

invited to devote the World Day to promoting awareness of the need for international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought, and on the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer (16 September)

In 1994, the General Assembly proclaimed 16 September the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer (resolution 49/114 of 19 December). States were invited to devote the Day to promote activities in accordance with the objectives of the Protocol and its amendments. The ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects the Earth from the harmful portion of the rays of the sun, thus, helping preserve life on the planet.

International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (6 November)

On 5 November 2001, the General Assembly declared 6 November of each year as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (resolution 56/4). In taking this action, it considered that damage to the environment in times of armed conflict impairs ecosystems and natural resources long after the period of conflict, often extending beyond the limits of national territories and the present generation. It also recalled the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which emphasized the necessity of working to protect our common environment.

HUMAN RIGHTS

United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)

The General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education in 1994, to begin on 1 January 1995, and welcomed the Plan of Action for the Decade submitted by the Secretary-General (resolution 49/184). The Assembly stated that human rights education should be a lifelong process by which people learn respect for the dignity of others. It called on governments to direct education towards full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Coordinator for implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade is the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On 19 December 2001, the General Assembly urged governments to contribute further to implementation of the Plan of Action by encouraging the establishment of broadly representative national committees to develop national plans for human rights education (resolution 56/167).

World Refugee Day
(20 June)

On 4 December 2000, the General Assembly noted that 2001 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had agreed to have International Refugee Day coincide with Africa Refugee Day on 20 June. It, therefore, decided that, as from 2001, 20 June would be celebrated as World Refugee Day (resolution 55/76). [Note: The OAU was replaced by the African Union on 9 July 2002.]

International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
(26 June)

The Assembly in 1997, on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council (decision 1997/251), proclaimed 26 June United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (resolution 52/149 of 12 December). The Day aims at the eradication of torture and the effective functioning of the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which entered into force on 26 June 1987.

International Day for Tolerance
(16 November)

In 1996, the General Assembly invited Member States to observe the International Day for Tolerance on 16 November, with activities directed towards both educational establishments and the wider public (resolution 51/95 of 12 December). This action came in the wake of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, 1995, proclaimed by the Assembly in 1993 (resolution 48/126). The Year had been declared on the initiative of the General Conference of UNESCO; on 16 November 1995, the UNESCO member States had adopted the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and Follow-up Plan of Action for the Year.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
(2 December)

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, recalls the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Others (resolution 317 (IV) of 2 December 1949).

Human Rights Day
(10 December)

All States and interested organizations were invited by the General Assembly in 1950 to observe 10 December as Human Rights Day (resolution 423 (V)). The Day marks the anniversary of the Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

International Migrants Day
(18 December)

As recommended by the Economic and Social Council (decision 2000/288 of 28 July 2000), the General Assembly has proclaimed 18 December International Migrants Day (resolution 55/93 of 4 December 2000). On that day, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was adopted in 1990 (resolution 45/158). The Assembly has stressed the need to make further efforts to ensure respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants. It is estimated that some 130 million people live outside their countries of origin.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

World Habitat Day
(first Monday of October)

In 1985, acting on a recommendation of the Commission on Human Settlements, the General Assembly designated the first Monday of October as World Habitat Day (resolution 40/202 A). The first observance of the Day, in 1986, marked the tenth anniversary of the first international conference on the issue -- Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, Canada, 1976).

HUNGER

International Year of Rice
(2004)

Noting that rice is the staple food of more than half of the world's population, the Assembly, on 16 December 2002, declared 2004 the International Year of Rice (resolution 57/162). In doing so, the Assembly affirmed the need to heighten awareness of the role of rice in alleviating poverty and malnutrition and reaffirmed the need to focus world attention on the role it can play in attaining internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

The Assembly invited the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to facilitate the implementation of the Year, in collaboration with governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Centres and other relevant United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

World Food Day
(16 October)

The aim of World Food Day, proclaimed in 1979 by the Conference of the FAO of the United Nations, is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The Day marks the date of the founding of the FAO in 1945. In 1980, the General Assembly endorsed observance of the Day in consideration of the fact that "food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity" (resolution 35/70 of 5 December).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People
(1994-2004)

In 1990, the General Assembly proclaimed 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People (resolution 45/164). In 1993, on the recommendation of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, starting on 10 December 1994 (resolution 48/163), adopting the Programme of Activities for the Decade in 1995 (resolution 50/157). The goal of the Decade is to strengthen international cooperation for solving problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health. The Coordinator of the Decade is the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; its theme is "Indigenous people: Partnership in action".

On 19 December 2001, the Assembly appealed to all governments and organizations to consider contributing to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, if possible with a substantial increase in the level of contributions (resolution 56/140).

International Day of the World's Indigenous People
(9 August)

In 1994, the General Assembly decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous People shall be observed on 9 August every year during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (resolution 49/214 of 23 December). The date marks the day of the first meeting, in 1982, of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

INFORMATION

World Summit on the Information Society (10-12 December 2003)

The first part of a World Summit on the Information Society, initiated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), will be held this year in Geneva, from 10 to 12 December, with the second, concluding part to be held in Tunis in 2005. On 21 December 2001, the General Assembly invited the ITU to assume the leading managerial role for the Summit and invited governments to be represented at the highest possible level (resolution 56/183).

On 20 December 2002, the Assembly welcomed the preparations for the Summit at the national and regional levels, encouraging all countries to intensify their work (resolution 57/238). It also welcomed the decision of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force to contribute actively to the preparatory process for the Summit. Also on that day, the Assembly outlined elements for creating a global culture of cybersecurity, inviting Member States and all relevant international organizations to take account of them in their preparations for the Summit (resolution 57/239).

World Press Freedom Day (3 May)

The General Assembly in 1993 declared 3 May as World Press Freedom Day (decision 48/432 of 20 December). This action stemmed from the UNESCO General Conference, which, by a 1991 resolution on "Promotion of press freedom in the world", had recognized that a free, pluralistic and independent press was an essential component of any democratic society. The General Conference had transmitted to the General Assembly the wish of UNESCO member States to have 3 May declared "International Press Freedom Day".

That date commemorates the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, adopted on 3 May 1991 by the Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, organized by UNESCO and the United Nations in Windhoek, Namibia.

World Development Information Day (24 October)

The General Assembly in 1972 instituted World Development Information Day to draw the attention of world public opinion to development problems and the need to strengthen international cooperation to solve them (resolution 3038(XXVII)). The Assembly decided that the date for the Day should coincide in principle with United Nations Day, 24 October, which was also the date of the adoption, in 1970, of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. The Assembly felt that improving the dissemination of information and the mobilization of public opinion, particularly among young people, would lead to greater awareness of the problems of development, thus, promoting efforts in the sphere of international cooperation for development.

World Television Day
(21 November)

In 1996, the General Assembly proclaimed 21 November as World Television Day, commemorating the date on which, in 1996, the first World Television Forum was held at the United Nations. States were invited to observe the Day by encouraging global exchanges of television programmes focusing on issues such as peace, security, economic and social development, and the enhancement of cultural exchanges (resolution 51/205 of 17 December).

NATURAL DISASTERS

International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction
(second Wednesday of October)

In 2001, the General Assembly decided to maintain the observance of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction on the second Wednesday of October (resolution 56/195 of 21 December), as a vehicle to promote a global culture of natural disaster reduction -- including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. The Assembly had designated that day to be observed during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1990-1999 (resolution 44/236).

OLDER PERSONS

International Day of Older Persons
(1 October)

The General Assembly designated 1 October the International Day of Older Persons by resolution 45/106 of 14 December 1990, following up on United Nations initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed later that year by the General Assembly.

OUTER SPACE

World Space Week
(4-10 October)

By resolution 54/68 of 6 December 1999, the General Assembly proclaimed World Space Week, to be observed between 4 and 10 October, to celebrate the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human

condition. The dates recall the launch, on 4 October 1957, of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik I, and the entry into force, on 10 October 1967, of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space.

PALESTINE QUESTION

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November)

In 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (resolution 32/40 B). On that day, in 1947, the Assembly had adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine (resolution 181 (II)). On 3 December 2001, the Assembly noted the actions taken by Member States to observe the Day, and requested that they continue to give it the widest possible publicity (resolution 56/34).

Reaffirming that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until it was resolved in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy, the Assembly, on 3 December 2001, authorized the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to continue to promote the exercise of these rights, to adjust its work programme in the light of developments and to emphasize the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people (resolution 56/33). The Committee was asked to continue to cooperate with Palestinian and other civil society organizations in mobilizing international support for the achievement by the Palestinian people of its rights and for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, and to involve additional civil society organizations in its work.

PEACE

International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)

On 5 November 2001, the General Assembly stated that the objective of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, is to further strengthen the global movement for a culture of peace (resolution 56/5). It invited States to expand their activities promoting such a culture and requested that UNESCO, as lead agency for the Decade, further strengthen their activities to promote a culture of peace.

Proclaiming the Decade in 1998 (resolution 53/25 of 10 November), the Assembly invited non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and groups, educational institutions, artists and the media to support the Decade for the benefit of every child of the world.

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers
(29 May)

The Assembly has designated 29 May of each year as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace (resolution 57/129, 11 December 2002). The Assembly invited all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and individuals to observe the Day in an appropriate manner.

International Day of Peace
(21 September)

In 1981, the General Assembly declared that the opening day of its regular session in September "shall be officially dedicated and observed as the International Day of Peace and shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples" (resolution 36/67). In 1998, the Assembly reaffirmed that the Day should continue to be observed on the opening day of its annual regular session (resolution 52/232 of 4 June).

On 7 September 2001, the Assembly decided that, beginning in 2002, the International Day of Peace shall be observed on 21 September each year, with this date to be brought to the attention of all people for the celebration and observance of peace (resolution 55/282). It declared that the Day shall, henceforth, be observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence, an invitation to all nations and people to honour a cessation of hostilities throughout the Day. It also invited Member States, United Nations bodies, regional and non-governmental organizations to commemorate the Day and to cooperate with the United Nations in establishing the global ceasefire.

RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination
(1993-2003)

In 1993, the General Assembly proclaimed the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, beginning in 1993, and adopted its Programme of Action (resolution 48/91 of 20 December). The Assembly urged governments to combat new forms of racism -- such as xenophobia and related intolerance; discrimination based on culture, nationality, religion or language; and racism resulting from official doctrines of racial superiority or exclusivity, such as ethnic cleansing. The First Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was proclaimed in 1973, and the Second Decade in 1983.

International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and Its Abolition (2004)

The General Assembly, on 18 December 2002, proclaimed 2004 the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and Its Abolition (resolution 57/195). It took this action as part of its follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held at Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001. The Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to a global drive for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and stressed the need to maintain political will and momentum at the national, regional and international levels.

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination (beginning on 21 March)

As part of its programme for the first Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the General Assembly in 1979 called for the observance by all States of a Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination, beginning on 21 March (resolution 34/24).

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws". Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination (resolution 2142 (XXI)).

WOMEN

United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace (8 March)

In 1977 (resolution 32/142), the General Assembly invited States to proclaim, in accordance with their historical and national traditions and customs, any day of the year as United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. States were called upon to contribute to creating conditions for the elimination of discrimination against women and for their full and equal participation in social development. That action came on the wake of the International Women's Year (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), both proclaimed by the Assembly. The United Nations began observing International Women's Day, 8 March, in 1975 -- the International Women's Year.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November)

The General Assembly has designated 25 November International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and has invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize on that day activities to raise public awareness on the problem (resolution 54/134 of 17 December 1999). Women's activists have marked 25 November as a day against violence since 1981. The date came from the brutal 1961 assassination of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic, on orders of Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo.

YOUTH

International Youth Day (12 August)

The General Assembly on 17 December 1999 (resolution 54/120 I) endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, 8-12 August 1998) that 12 August be declared International Youth Day. It recommended that public information activities be organized to support the Day as a way to promote better awareness of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the Assembly in 1995 (resolution 50/81).

OTHER CONFERENCES AND OBSERVANCES

International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material (7-11 July 2003)

The International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material will be held at Vienna, Austria, from 7 to 11 July 2003. Held under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it will include sessions on background issues, liability, regulatory regime, radiation protection in transport, packaging for various types of radioactive material, compliance and quality assurance in transport, emergency preparedness and response, and communications with the public and between governments. The General Assembly, on 11 November 2002, urged States to participate in the Conference, with a view to addressing in a comprehensive way and following up as necessary on all issues in its programme (resolution A/RES/57/9).

The Year of Kyrgyz Statehood (2003)

The Assembly, on 20 December 2002, welcomed efforts undertaken by the Kyrgyz Republic to declare 2003 as the Year of Kyrgyz Statehood and to organize activities in celebration of the Year (resolution 57/248). It invited Member States, the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other international and intergovernmental organizations, as well as regional and non-governmental organizations and foundations, to take part in the events being organized by the Kyrgyz Republic to celebrate the Year.

International Day of Families (15 May)

In 1993, the General Assembly decided that 15 May of every year should be observed as the International Day of Families (resolution 47/237 of 20 September). In 1989, by resolution 44/82, the Assembly had proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, to increase awareness of family issues and improve the capability of nations to tackle family-related problems with comprehensive policies.

United Nations Public Service Day (23 June)

The Assembly, on 20 December, designated 23 June of each year as United Nations Public Service Day (resolution 57/277). It encouraged Member States to organize special events on that Day to highlight the contribution of public service in the development process.

World Population Day (11 July)

In 1989, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recommended that 11 July be observed as World Population Day. An outgrowth of the Day of Five Billion, celebrated on 11 July 1987, the Day seeks to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues, particularly in the context of overall development plans and programmes, and the need to find solutions for these issues. In 2001, world population stood at 6.1 billion, and was growing by 77 million a year. The United Nations estimates there will be between 7.9 billion and 10.9 billion people in 2050, with 9.3 billion the most likely projection.

United Nations Day
(24 October)

The anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter on 24 October 1945 has been celebrated as United Nations Day since 1948. It has traditionally been marked throughout the world by meetings, discussions and exhibits on the achievements and goals of the Organization. In 1971, the General Assembly recommended that Member States observe it as a public holiday (resolution 2782 (XXVI)).

International Civil Aviation Day
(7 December)

In 1996, the General Assembly proclaimed 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day, and urged governments, as well as national, regional, international and intergovernmental organizations, to take steps to observe it (resolution 51/33 of 6 December). The Day had been declared in 1992 by the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations specialized agency, to highlight and advance the benefits of international civil aviation. Observation of the Day started on 7 December 1994 -- the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, which established ICAO.

Other International Days

Other international days observed throughout the United Nations system include: International Mother Language Day (21 February); World Meteorological Day (23 March); World Health Day (7 April); World Book and Copyright Day (23 April); World Telecommunication Day (17 May); World No-Tobacco Day (31 May); International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition (23 August); International Literacy Day (8 September); World Maritime Day (during last week of September); World Teachers' Day (5 October); World Post Day (9 October); and World Mental Health Day (10 October).

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